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New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Vidricaire (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to assure you of Canada's full support as you carry out the weighty tasks that await you.

The year 1998 has been a significant one in the realm of international security.

We have experienced a profound test of the strength of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear-non-proliferation regimes. We have seen significant steps forward on conventional arms. It has become clearer than ever that the international community must continually defend its historic successes as it tries to expand its future horizons.

Canada's point of departure vis-à-vis non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament with regard to weapons of mass destruction is the maintenance, defence and enhancement of the implementation of three fundamental global treaties: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). These fundamental instruments are complemented by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In The Hague, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is working to ensure that Treaty's implementation. We welcome those intensive efforts. In Geneva, in keeping with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, confidence-building negotiations are under way. That Convention needs more muscle, and an effective compliance protocol is the answer. To achieve that goal, Canada supports the Australian initiative to give political impetus to those negotiations. If the international community is truly concerned about biological weapons — and we believe that it should be — the time is ripe to give those negotiations new energy and greater priority so that we can conclude an effective protocol soon.

This brings us to the NPT. It is useful to recall what the international community has created with this Treaty. The NPT entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995. Canada warmly welcomes Brazil's accession on 18 September 1998. The NPT now has 187 States parties, more States than are Members of the United Nations and all but four States of the international community. It is the best tool we could possibly have for carrying out a very difficult task. The NPT is the legal foundation the international community has created to build nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is the only international treaty that commits the nuclear-weapon States, politically and legally, to pursue nuclear disarmament. It is the only treaty that prohibits the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The international community must continue to pursue vigorously the implementation of all the obligations contained in the NPT.

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The vitality of the NPT depends in part on the success of the new preparatory process for future NPT Review Conferences. At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, States parties agreed that the process would be different, that its integrity would be enhanced and that it would pursue all substantive aspects of the 1995 agreements. Canada has been fully engaged in efforts to ensure that outcome. This means that the meetings of the Preparatory Committee must be able to develop recommendations on substantive issues for consideration at the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT. We think that each session of the Preparatory Committee should enable us to deal with substantive issues relevant to the Treaty. We should not have to wait until 2000 to express consensus opinions on key issues of pressing concern to the States parties. At the 1998 meeting of the Preparatory Committee it was clear that, while the vast majority of the international community agreed with this approach, a few States did not. The need for a more dynamic and reassuring process in the NPT Preparatory Committee is all the more pressing now. We urge the few States that have been more cautious or selective to reconsider the consequences of their reluctance and to act to support the integrity and vitality of the regime. All States have a stake in and can benefit from this more proactive approach.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, efforts are clearly already under way to implement the obligations of the NPT. A vigorous START process is essential to nuclear disarmament. START I entered into force on 5 December 1994, and we are told that its implementation is ahead of schedule. Ballistic missiles are being dismantled, and fissile material is being removed from warheads. We continue to applaud this. This is nuclear disarmament in action. We also recognize that a number of parallel agreements have been reached in the context of this process, including those reached at the most recent United States-Russia summit meeting, some of whose elements have already begun to be implemented. We welcome this too.

Unfortunately, however, the START process is at present at a standstill. We must move forward. The ratification and implementation of START II are essential for enhancing international security. We have been waiting since 3 January 1993, when START II was signed by Russia and the United States, for it to be ratified and enter into force. Last year, we again welcomed the United States ratification and called upon Russia to do likewise. This was not merely rhetorical encouragement: Canada has a fundamental and clear security interest in seeing this Treaty ratified and implemented, as well as in seeing the START process continue. In 1998, we again called for completion of the ratification process for START II.

The smooth and prompt initiation of START III negotiations is also essential to furthering the process of nuclear disarmament. The reduction of the number of nuclear weapons and nuclear warheads possessed and deployed by the United States and Russia does more than increase those two States' confidence in their own security. It also helps reassure States in every region about their own security and about the vitality of the international security regime. This, in turn, is conducive to progress on a range of other security issues. To help reinvigorate the ongoing process of nuclear disarmament, we call upon the United States and Russia to implement all those undertakings already agreed between them, including especially negotiations for START III.

It is also clear that in the systematic and progressive pursuit of their legally binding obligations to achieve nuclear disarmament the other three nuclear-weapon States can and should join the START process in the near future. As part of such an effort, we think that preliminary discussions to this end would bolster international confidence in the international security regime.

The CTBT bans nuclear explosive tests for all time. Concluded in 1996, the Treaty now boasts 150 States signatories, 21 of which have ratified it. Canada's domestic legislation has been approved by the House of Commons, and we hope to deposit our instrument of ratification soon. We welcome the work under way in Vienna to make the verification regime completely functional as soon as the Treaty enters into force. We look forward to a political conference in the autumn of 1999, as called for by article XIV of the CTBT, as a contribution to an ongoing process to promote the Treaty's early entry into force. The Treaty's text is clear that the political conference is to consider measures consistent with international law to accelerate the ratification process so as to facilitate the early entry into force of the CTBT. We look forward to participating fully in that conference to ensure that its objective is achieved.

In 1998, the Conference on Disarmament finally agreed to begin to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This treaty has been a Canadian goal for more than 40 years. We keenly hope that these negotiations will lead to the early conclusion of a treaty that will promote both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. We will work intensively with all interested countries to conclude such a treaty. We realize that much reflection is

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necessary in order for the negotiations to be pursued effectively. Canada is confident that the international community will be prepared to deal with substantive issues when the Conference on Disarmament reconvenes in January of next year.

Canada considers that the absence of agreement on whether the question of stockpiles should be a part of a possible treaty on halting the production of fissile materials does not mean that we should ignore such a vital issue. The reduction of fissile material stockpiles is an essential part of nuclear disarmament. According to authoritative estimates, about 2,000 tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium are currently stockpiled. That is enough material for 100,000 nuclear warheads. We call for a moratorium on all production of fissile material for the duration of the treaty negotiations. Moreover, States possessing weapons-grade fissile material should take progressive steps to remove it irreversibly from the military cycle. The United States and Russia have already taken steps to that end, such as those announced at the recent summit meeting between President Clinton and President Yeltsin. We welcome those steps. We also welcome the trilateral discussions on this issue between the United States, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as the unilateral steps taken by the United Kingdom. Those steps, and others like them, will provide a better atmosphere for the negotiation of an effective treaty.

The NPT obligates all States to help to reduce the global threat of nuclear weapons. This means that we must make it possible to engage in serious and substantive discussions of nuclear-disarmament issues. Since September 1996, Canada has proposed that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva establish a subsidiary body for that purpose. Others have made similar proposals. It is time for the Conference on Disarmament to respond. A mechanism within the Conference on Disarmament with a mandate to engage in a substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues would show our faith in the international security regime. It would promote the vitality of the regime and would be in the security interests of all States. The international community has a right to expect no less.

In short, it is clear that nuclear disarmament is becoming a reality. In some areas, however, the pace has slowed in recent years. It must be accelerated. The time is ripe for more to be done.

It is also clear that we must continue to be vigilant with regard to nuclear non-proliferation. In this decade, we have faced setbacks and have welcomed positive developments. With regard to the former, two States parties have attempted in recent years to acquire or develop nuclear weapons. The NPT has provided the legal basis for rolling back these attempts to develop nuclear weapons.

There are also positive examples of developments that have enhanced the non-proliferation regime. Early in this decade, one State voluntarily gave up its nuclear weapons to join the regime as a non-nuclear-weapon State. More recently, three States transferred to the Russian Federation the nuclear weapons left on their territories following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Those three States also joined the regime as non-nuclear-weapon States. As we have already mentioned, less than a month ago Brazil announced its accession to the Treaty. Most recently, the IAEA has established its 93+2 model protocol. On that basis, bilateral protocols are being concluded with the Agency. This strengthens the regime's ability to detect and prevent further moves towards proliferation. Each of these positive developments has clearly enhanced international security.

Notwithstanding all our success in maintaining, defending and enhancing the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, in 1998 the regime has again been seriously challenged by the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests. While neither country had adhered to the NPT, their arguments purporting to justify those tests attack the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. Canada condemns nuclear-weapon testing and rejects those arguments.

Non-proliferation means no proliferation at all under any circumstances. Nothing in the regime authorizes selective proliferation by some States and not by others. All attempts at proliferation must be halted if international and regional security are to be enhanced and if the integrity and viability of the NPT are to be preserved. This is one of the fundamental principles of the NPT. It is a principle that we, with many other States, have reaffirmed in other key international forums in response to the challenges of the South Asian tests. We need the NPT principles in order to carry out sustainable, coherent action. If we allow the regime or the principles on which it is built to be undermined in any way as a result of events in a given region or as the result of our response to those events, the security of States in all other regions of the world may well be jeopardized. All States must have confidence that the regime's most basic principles will be applied consistently and coherently. We have worked too hard for too long to turn back now.

We welcome efforts to engage in dialogue with India and Pakistan for the purpose of drawing them into the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. The threat to regional security and the economic and social consequences for South Asia outweigh any attempt to justify the pursuit of a nuclear-weapons programme. Foreign Minister Axworthy emphasized in his statement on 26 May 1998 that there can be no enhanced status, explicit or implicit, conferred upon these States in our efforts to roll back this latest attempt at proliferation. Any such status would undermine not only the principles but also the implementation and the success of the NPT.

The growing global commitment to human security is nowhere clearer than in the common effort to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. The progress achieved in this area has been remarkable indeed. The whole world — people, States and civil society — has recognized the tragic human toll of anti-personnel landmines. The vast majority of the international community has agreed that a total ban on these indiscriminate weapons is the best solution.

Canada is delighted that, thanks to the commitment of many Governments, the Convention on Anti-personnel Mines, which was negotiated at Oslo and opened for signature in Ottawa last December, will enter into force on 1 March 1999. We warmly welcome the invitation of the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of States parties in Maputo in May of 1999. That meeting will provide important political impetus and practical focus to ensure that the world is rid of anti-personnel landmines in years rather than decades. It will mark the beginning of a formal — indeed, legal — process that will ensure not only that treaty commitments are implemented but also that the high standards of the Convention are upheld. Canada is a proud sponsor of the First Committee's draft resolution welcoming the fortieth ratification of the Convention, which has set us on the road to the first meeting of States parties. We hope that many other countries will join us in support of this draft resolution.

Canada is committed to working with friends and partners to universalize the Convention and, just as importantly, to ensure that demining and victim-assistance efforts are adequately funded and sustained over the long term. The Governments, non-governmental organizations and institutions that have worked so effectively in conjunction with the United Nations must continue to work together with determination in this next phase. Our efforts in support of the Convention and the humanitarian mine-action agenda that it underpins will be greatly assisted if donors can work together with mine-affected States and the non-governmental-organization community to tackle resolutely the humanitarian challenge posed by anti-personnel mines. We are fortunate to have the United Nations Mine Action Service to assist in bringing coherence, collaborative will and resources to this effort. As we have repeatedly stated elsewhere, the Convention provides the comprehensive framework for action against landmines. That is why we continue to pursue its universalization.

The insecurity and widespread human suffering caused by the proliferation and vast accumulations of small arms and light weapons are troubling, despite the fact that these are legitimate weapons used by States for legitimate purposes. Yet huge quantities of these weapons appear to move unchecked from region to region and to fall into the wrong hands, with negative consequences for regional stability, local communities and individuals.

We share the concern of others that the small-arms and light-weapons issue must be resolved. The challenge is to define the problem, which has many complexities — political, legal, technical, economic and social. There are a number of efforts under way to explore the various dimensions of the issue and to develop viable, practical policy options. We look forward with great interest to participating in those efforts. The international community, informed by the conclusions of that reflection, should be able to take effective action.

The acquisition of large quantities of conventional weapons beyond the needs of legitimate defence continues to pose a fundamental challenge to international security. We recognize that States have a sovereign right to protect themselves. However, such strategic decisions should not prompt or fuel regional or interregional arms races. In our view, the process of ensuring regional stability involves three steps, namely, transparency, dialogue and restraint. It is more urgent than ever that we take full advantage of the tools at our disposal to ensure this stability. We emphasize the continued importance of States' utilizing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a mechanism for pursuing those three steps. We also congratulate the States members of the European Union on their contribution, as one of several regional contributions to enhanced responsibility and transparency, through the adoption of a code of conduct on the export of conventional arms.

The final issue we wish to highlight is that of the non-militarization of outer space. This is a fundamental strategic issue that should be addressed as we prepare to enter the

new millennium. An increasing number of States are demonstrating a capability to make use of outer space. Many States have been making large investments in developing space-based capability in areas such as communications and surveillance for both civilian and military purposes. To be quite clear, we have no desire to change this reality. Quite the contrary: Canada is a vast country that has made large investments in and enjoys substantial benefits from the peaceful uses of outer space. We want to ensure that this opportunity continues to exist for all States. However, weapons based in outer space by one or more States would undermine an important, indeed vital, aspect of international security. There is at present no international regime to ensure against this possible abuse of outer space. To that end, Canada has formally proposed that the security of all States would be enhanced through the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty banning the militarization of outer space. We believe that this is an issue that deserves urgent consideration. We regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to take action on our proposal this year. We hope it will be in a position to do so in 1999.

In 1998, we have witnessed developments in the sphere of international security, some encouraging and some very disturbing. The nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime is not just a collection of documents. It is a body of politically and legally binding treaties, beginning with the NPT. These instruments — both the norms they create and the practical effects of their vigorous implementation — must be defended and, when challenged, upheld. The regime can be maintained and enhanced only with the active support of all States concerned. We can never avoid or prevent challenges to such a regime. The ultimate test is in the quality and integrity of the response to those challenges. Without these treaties, the security of each and every State would be significantly diminished. We believe that 1998 will be seen as a turning point in the history of international security. It will be seen as the year in which the regime was fundamentally challenged. It is our firm belief that it will also be seen as the year in which the regime survived that challenge. It is up to us, the international community, to ensure that this happens.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): Mr. Chairman, at the outset I would like to warmly congratulate you on your election to preside over the First Committee. I am confident that under your wise and able leadership the Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana, who skilfully conducted the work of the First Committee.

Turkey, like many countries, is committed to the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. This goal should be pursued with realism through a balanced approach that encompasses steps relating to both nuclear and conventional arms. Success in disarmament and arms control initiatives depends primarily on the creation of a political atmosphere that inspires confidence. To be effective, any disarmament or arms control measures must provide for undiminished security for the countries concerned, without upsetting the global strategic balance. They must provide for adequate and appropriate verification. Greater transparency in defence issues is indispensable in order to avoid uncertainty, misunderstanding and insecurity. Thus, adequate verification and transparency are two fundamental principles of disarmament.

We believe that the spread of nuclear weapons would undermine the security of all nations and that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) plays a critical role in preventing such spread. For that the purpose, the NPT, by establishing a global form of nuclear non-proliferation, is one of the most important treaties of all time.

Turkey has been an ardent supporter of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and of its full implementation since its inception. While strictly abiding by the provisions of the Treaty, we have constantly encouraged all countries to accede to it with a view to giving more vigour to the appeal directed to nuclear-weapon States for rapid progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the recent decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to start negotiations concerning the fissile material cut-off treaty. We look forward to the early conclusion of those negotiations.

With regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones, Turkey has traditionally supported the establishment of such zones wherever possible and practically feasible. Since the establishment of such zones has a direct bearing on the security of States within the defined regions and on the existing military balance, the desire for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should necessarily come from all the countries in the zone, and the principle of undiminished security should be strictly observed.

Concerning nuclear tests, Turkey signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on the day it was opened for signature, and it has already been submitted to the Parliament for ratification. We also contributed actively to the establishment of the CTBT Organization, and we are making every effort to fulfil our commitments to the International Monitoring System.

Turkey has made a number of statements in which it has repeatedly voiced its concerns about the nuclear tests conducted in South Asia in May. We have noted that these developments may have serious repercussions on regional and global security and stability. We sincerely hope that these tests will not lead to a new nuclear arms race. We are encouraged by the announcements of the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India indicating the readiness of both of their Governments to work towards the conclusion of discussions and their respective signings of the CTBT. We appreciate their heeding the concerns of the international community.

The year we are leaving behind has brought little that is positive to the global proliferation predicament, which we all seek to bring under control. Today as never before, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a growing, tangible threat facing all our nations. In 1998, the menace of missile proliferation has taken a new turn with the successive flight tests in South-East Asia and in the Middle East. As a country situated in a region that is vulnerable to the high risks of proliferation, we have followed these developments with concern. In the light of the negative impact of such events on regional and international security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery has become an even more pressing agenda item for international peace and security.

The Middle East is one of the regions where the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery poses a tangible threat. Turkey's geographical proximity to the region requires us to view with vigilance the evolution in the scale of the threat and to take part in collective efforts aimed at devising measures to reverse this alarming trend.

In the light of those considerations, Turkey has become a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Missile Technology Control Regime dealing with non-proliferation matters. My country also actively contributes to international efforts aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the CTBT. My country has also expressed its desire to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Australian Group and the Zangger Committee. We have already adjusted our national legislation to meet the requirements of the NSG.

It is Turkey's desire that all countries — first in our region and then globally — come to share the goals of non-proliferation and work collectively towards their achievement. One of our policy objectives is to encourage actual and potential suppliers to act with maximum restraint in the transfer of sensitive items that could lead to proliferation, especially in regions of concern.

Turkey has ratified both the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1972 Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons, without any reservations. It is evident that present international agreements to prevent the development and spread of biological and toxin weapons are far from meeting today's requirements. In addition to the obvious dangers posed by the existence of biological and chemical weapons, the possibility of their exploitation by terrorist organizations is a constant threat to the international community. Therefore, the conclusion of a protocol that would help strengthen and promote the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention is essential for regional and global peace. With this understanding, we have from the very beginning supported the Australian initiative to hold an unofficial meeting at the ministerial level with a view to giving impetus to the work of the Ad Hoc Group that has been negotiating the protocol to the BWC. We were pleased to see that that meeting was held at the United Nations last month. We also believe in the value of a further high-level meeting to be held in 1999 to take into account the developments in the Ad Hoc Group.

Turkey is fully conscious of the human suffering and casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. However, the security situation around Turkey is distinctly different from that faced by the proponents of the Ottawa process. It is also a fact that mines are being used indiscriminately by terrorist organizations. These objective factors preclude Turkey's signature of the Ottawa Convention at this stage. We keep an open mind, however, towards an eventual ban, to be achieved in stages. This approach would correspond to the evolutionary character of Turkey's policy regarding anti-personnel landmines. With the humanitarian aspects of the question in mind, in January 1996 we put into effect a national moratorium banning the sale and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. I am pleased to inform the Committee that, as a renewed expression of Turkey's determination to

contribute to the ongoing efforts of the international community aimed at preventing the casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines and of its commitment to the humanitarian objectives of the relevant international instruments in this field, we have today announced Turkey's decision to extend the moratorium for another three years following its expiration.

We are also developing a number of bilateral initiatives with some of our neighbours to establish regimes for keeping common borders free from anti-personnel landmines and preventing their use in border areas in the future. To this end, we have already initiated contacts with Bulgaria and Georgia. These developments, we believe, could contribute to the programme for mine action prepared during the Ottawa Conference.

In the field of conventional arms control, Turkey continues to regard the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as the cornerstone of European security and stability. It has, in fact, led to the elimination of a very large number of weapons, under international supervision. Turkey shares the general understanding that the CFE Treaty needs to be adapted to the new security conditions in Europe. Given the indivisibility of security, it is our firm belief that the adapted Treaty should satisfy not only one country or region but all 30 States parties. It should also safeguard and promote the Treaty's objectives, viability and effectiveness.

The CFE flank regime, insofar as Turkey's security is concerned, constitutes the heart of the Treaty. Its preservation is therefore a vital goal for us. Throughout the adaptation process, Turkey will continue to work in a constructive spirit to ensure that the flank regime is reconciled with the adapted CFE in a manner satisfactory to all States parties.

Turkey, cognizant of the serious threat to international peace and security posed by the illicit trade in small arms, fully supports the efforts made in that field in international forums. In that respect, Turkey, which voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 52/38 J, fully supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade, as envisaged in paragraph 4 of that resolution. Turkey believes that such a conference will make it possible to have an in-depth analysis of all aspects of the illicit arms trade.

At this juncture, we would like to state that the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/52/298) constitutes an important and comprehensive contribution to the treatment of the subject. Although the connection between drug-trafficking and the illicit trade in small arms, so present in regional conflicts, is mentioned in the report, Turkey believes that, given its significance, this question should be dealt with more extensively. In addition, my country is of the opinion that in the recommendations section of the report it would be beneficial to refer to the need to include small arms in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We also support the other initiatives concerning small arms and light weapons that offer better prospects for new and improved international cooperation.

Turkey welcomes the important decisions adopted at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee and on revitalizing, rationalizing and streamlining the work of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that we will reach an early conclusion on both matters.

As in the past, my country is ready to participate in the discussions of the First Committee in a constructive manner with the goal of removing the seeds of instability and insecurity.

Mr. Ulland (Norway): Let me first join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Your skills and long experience in this field will no doubt ensure constructive and productive work, and I can assure you of our cooperation and support.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues continue to be a primary preoccupation of the international community. The best way to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons is through the realization that the acquisition of such weapons does not serve the political or security interests of a State. It is for this reason that international cooperation in efforts to resolve local and regional conflicts should be seen as a major contribution to non-proliferation. The underlying causes of conflict should therefore be addressed in the context of non-proliferation efforts and nuclear-disarmament negotiations in order to remove the incentives for going nuclear.

The events in South Asia earlier this year have accentuated the interrelationship between an unstable regional security environment and the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The decisions of India and Pakistan to carry out underground nuclear tests are in clear defiance of international norms and constitute a serious threat to the global nuclear-non-proliferation regime and to peace and stability in the entire region. We

believe that India and Pakistan would be acting in their own best interests by abandoning their nuclear-weapons programmes and by complying with the norms established by the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We have noted India's and Pakistan's statements in the General Assembly announcing their intention to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we urge both countries to become parties to the Treaty without delay or conditions. We would like to see them take similar action with regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The nuclear-weapon States have an obligation, enshrined in the NPT, to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. Efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear weapons should be intensified and pursued with determination. The codification of the systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons undertaken by the United States and the Russian Federation are an example of a nuclear-weapon State living up to this obligation. We hope to see this process continue, and we call upon the Russian Federation to ratify the START II agreement so that negotiations on START III can commence as soon as START II enters into force. Further concrete progress demonstrated by the nuclear-weapon States would be welcome.

We also welcome the measures taken by the Government of the United Kingdom in the context of the strategic-defence review as valuable contributions to nuclear disarmament. We have taken note of recent initiatives on nuclear disarmament by several countries. We value inputs and ideas which are realistic and contribute constructively to progress in this important field.

Our ultimate goal remains complete nuclear disarmament. That goal can best be achieved by the promotion of progressive steps towards the elimination of these weapons. One important and urgent step in this regard is to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Such a ban is a necessary component of a comprehensive system of increased controls of these materials. We welcome the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a fissile-material cut-off treaty. A treaty cutting the fissile-material stockpiles available for use in nuclear would be a significant contribution to the achievement of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We look forward to contributing to the negotiations, which should start at the beginning of the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that the negotiating mandate should be confined to the subject of production of fissile material. At the same time, it is important to address the issue of past production and existing stockpiles in an appropriate manner. In our view, this issue can best be dealt with outside the negotiating framework, in a separate, parallel and voluntary process designed to enhance transparency and build confidence in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are pleased to note that the United States and the Russian Federation agreed at the summit meeting held at Moscow in early September to commence work on an ambitious programme for the management and disposition of stockpiles of plutonium for nuclear weapons. This example demonstrates what can be achieved through a voluntary process. We hope that this initiative can be expanded to the multilateral level, thus making possible close cooperation with other countries possessing a nuclear capability.

The issue of management and disposition of weapons-grade fissile material should be seen as a central part of nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We believe that there would be merit in voluntary measures that would increase transparency on holdings of plutonium and highly enriched uranium through reporting, inspection and safeguard procedures, with a view to introducing an agreed, monitored net reduction in these stockpiles.

Transparency as a confidence-building measure should apply to all States with a nuclear capability, but for obvious reasons the primary burden would be on the nuclear-weapon States. In order to trigger discussions on this issue, Norway has submitted a working paper proposing four successive steps to deal with the issue of transparency. As a first step, the nuclear Powers could, on a voluntary basis, provide detailed information on their stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. A second step could be to ensure cooperative measures to clarify and confirm those declarations. As a third step, the nuclear Powers could permit international inspection of their stocks, and, as a fourth step, agreed monitored net reductions from those stockpiles could be introduced. In addition, consistent and stringent international standards of accounting and security for fissile materials could be established. This proposal concerning voluntary transparency measures for the management and disposition of fissile material may serve as a useful model in dealing with the issue of past production and existing stockpiles in a separate process that would be complementary to the fissile-material cut-off treaty negotiations.

The fissile-material cut-off treaty must include a credible verification regime. In our view, such a regime should provide the same degree of assurance with regard to compliance as other non-proliferation and arms control agreements. Considerations of principle and practical applications suggest that the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the existing expert control regimes should be used as a basis when drawing up the verification arrangements for this treaty.

A fissile-material cut-off treaty may be seen as a tool for capping the amount of material available for nuclear weapons. Similarly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty may be regarded as its qualitative counterpart in preventing the future development of qualitatively new explosives. It is important that the States parties provide the necessary funding for the continued build-up of the provisional Technical Secretariat to make it fully operative as soon as possible. We welcome the fact that 150 countries have signed the Treaty and that 17 of them have ratified it so far. We also welcome the ratification by two of the nuclear-weapon States, the United Kingdom and France. Norway intends to ratify the Treaty in the course of this year. We must make every effort to ensure that the Treaty enters into force on the earliest possible date, and we strongly support the call for a conference in accordance with article XIV, paragraph 2 of the Treaty to discuss measures to speed up the process.

Norway attaches great importance to the IAEA's efforts to strengthen the process of nuclear non-proliferation by improving the effectiveness of the comprehensive safeguards system. We welcome the approval by the Board of Governors of the model additional protocol as a result of the 93+2 process, which enhances the Agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities.

Last year, Norway started the internal process of preparing for the conclusion of an additional protocol based on the model protocol, and we have now entered into consultations with the Secretariat for that purpose. We urge the broadest possible adherence to this new, binding international legal instrument.

International trafficking in nuclear material is a matter of international concern. Norway is actively involved in various projects to strengthen systems for the prevention and detection of illegal transactions involving such material. We appreciate the initiatives taken by the IAEA in the matter, and we recommend that those efforts be intensified. It is important that initiatives in this field include assistance to various countries to establish national legal frameworks and transparency networks that will make detection and enforcement more effective.

We welcome the accession of Brazil to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the most important international instrument for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament. The enhanced review process begun in 1995 provides an instrument for addressing these issues and for achieving progress. Unfortunately, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT proved to be, quite frankly, a failure. Attempts to begin substantial discussions on key issues did not succeed. No recommendations could be forwarded to the third session. The challenge now, we believe, is to lay the groundwork for a more constructive dialogue on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In order to get the enhanced review process back on track, the parties must act in accordance with the commitments and obligations undertaken in 1995.

The international community has a legitimate interest in being kept informed about progress achieved, as well as about difficulties and challenges encountered in the process of nuclear disarmament. Although we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should not be mandated to negotiate nuclear-weapons reductions, we do see a definite role for the Conference in questions relating to nuclear disarmament and nuclear arms control, in addition to the negotiations of the fissile material cut-off treaty. By establishing a procedure for reporting on nuclear issues and policies, the Conference on Disarmament could serve as an important forum for discussion and exchange of information. This would give the nuclear-weapon States an opportunity to provide information, both on the results achieved by unilateral and bilateral initiatives and on their nuclear policies, thus demonstrating their commitments in the field of nuclear disarmament. Increased transparency on nuclear issues would enhance confidence and reduce distrust. We believe that the proposals already submitted on this issue should be considered carefully and used as a basis for further dialogue.

The Conference on Disarmament is in urgent need of reform. Reform issues such as membership, working methods and agenda carry a great deal of political substance and have a direct impact on the matters of substance before the Conference. In its present form and with its present methods of work, the Conference on Disarmament has not managed to keep pace with the changing security and disarmament agenda. We are disappointed that the Conference was not able to expand its membership during

the 1998 session. Its relevance, credibility and political legitimacy are closely linked to its membership. In our view, the Conference would benefit from broader representation and a greater degree of openness. In today's world, it is not possible to deny or to justify denying any State membership in the Conference on Disarmament. It is politically unacceptable to continue to exclude countries from membership in a forum when they contribute to its funding. The Conference on Disarmament's task is to negotiate instruments establishing international norms that are universally adhered to. Thus, all States must have a right to take part in such negotiations on an equal footing. Having failed this year, the Conference on Disarmament must address the issue of expansion at the very beginning of next year's session.

The present working methods of the Conference on Disarmament do not facilitate its smooth operation. Too much time is spent on endless discussions on the reappointment of the Special Coordinator, on the re-establishment of ad hoc committees and on the adoption of a formal, seemingly unchanging agenda. Norway supports the continued endeavours to reform the Conference on Disarmament in order to secure the future of that body.

The fortieth ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines was a significant step towards a world free of anti-personnel mines. The remarkable speed of the ratification process clearly reflects the strong international will to resolve the humanitarian problems caused by these weapons. The Convention established an international framework for further comprehensive efforts towards this end; considerable resources have been mobilized for humanitarian demining and assistance to mine victims. Allocating resources to mine action within the framework of the Convention is a means of promoting universalization. Norway is contributing $120 million to these efforts over a five-year period.

We are grateful for the generous offer by the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of the States parties in Maputo in May 1999. It is highly appropriate that this first annual meeting under the Convention will take place in Africa. No other continent is more severely afflicted by the scourge of anti-personnel mines, and a meeting in an African State will provide a suitable venue for discussing the implementation of the Convention and furthering its objectives.

Every day we receive reports of violent and horrifying acts involving the use of small arms. At the same time, we do have a number of promising initiatives to control the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled use of small arms, which are now being launched, particularly at the regional level. The Inter-American Convention negotiated through the Organization of American States (OAS) to combat the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms requires States, *inter alia*, to strengthen border controls, mark firearms and share information on weapon producers, dealers, importers and exporters. Another welcome development is the recently adopted European Union Code of Conduct on arms exports, which sets out minimum criteria, to which Norway has also subscribed, and, last, but not least, the moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of light weapons in West Africa is unique in the way it combines security, development and disarmament concerns in a region plagued by violent intra-State conflicts. The success of the West African moratorium will depend on the support of the international community for the implementation arrangements. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Coordinated Action on Small Arms (CASA), and we note the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to host a United Nations conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. Norway is in favour of convening such a conference, but we believe it is essential to discuss further the exact scope of the conference and whether it should address only illicit trafficking. Before a decision is made, we should secure broader international support and a clearer understanding of the focus of the exercise.

Although a great deal of progress has been made, it is necessary to broaden the common international understanding of the concrete action needed to prevent and reduce the excessive proliferation and uncontrolled use of small arms. In recognition of the need for greater coordination of these many ongoing initiatives, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited representatives from 20 Governments to take part in a dialogue on small arms in Oslo in July. For the first time, Governments from all regions actually agreed to intensify and harmonize efforts in an effective and coherent manner.

In the Oslo document, a common understanding was reached on the main concerns and challenges. A number of action areas have been identified, such as combating illicit trafficking in small arms, tighter control of illegal transfers and the urgent need for the reduction of small arms in war-torn societies. The Canadian and Norwegian Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Axworthy and Mr. Vollebeck, hosted a follow-up ministerial special information briefing on small

arms in New York on 25 September. The interest shown was overwhelming. About 100 countries were represented, and the meeting was attended by foreign ministers and other ministers.

The Norwegian Government hopes that the Oslo document will help broaden international support for action against the excessive accumulation of small arms. In a further effort to be practical, Norway announced in the General Assembly some weeks ago the launching of a trust fund to support the prevention and reduction of the proliferation of small arms. We encourage other countries to contribute to the trust fund.

Of all the categories of weapons of mass destruction, biological agents are the only ones that are not subject to an international verification regime. Rapid scientific advances in the field of biotechnology underline the urgency of establishing credible and legally binding verification measures in this field. Norway attaches great importance to a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group in Geneva on a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons. Much of the work on technical aspects has already been done. What we need to focus on now is finding the necessary political solutions to the outstanding issues. Issues such as declarations, visits and provisions for rapid and effective investigations will be fundamental elements of a credible and effective future verification protocol. In elaborating provisions to cover these issues, we should be in close liaison with industry to establish targeted and viable mechanisms that meet our objectives. However, we must avoid imposing an undue burden on industry. Norway, for its part, is prepared to do its utmost to contribute to an early and successful conclusion of the negotiations in Geneva.

Norway welcomes the important decisions taken at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee, as well as on the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission. We regret, however, that only limited steps could be agreed. Reform of the First Committee remains a priority. Like others, Norway would like to see steps taken at this session for the further rationalization of the Committee's work.

Mr. Alborzi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am sure that under your able chairmanship the Committee will have a successful session this year. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my felicitations to the other officers of the Committee as well.

The past few years have witnessed unprecedented success in some areas of arms control and disarmament. The conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its entry into force, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the commencement of negotiations on a fissile-material cut-off treaty and the new impetus with regard to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are all signs that should make us optimistic about the future of the disarmament process. However, in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, two negative events have occurred. The recent nuclear tests in South Asia and the failure of the 1998 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have seriously affected the non-proliferation regime. We believe that the non-proliferation regime needs to be safeguarded and strengthened. In the meantime, the recent tests revealed that the existing non-proliferation regime can no longer serve as the sole basis for guaranteeing a safe future for a world free from the fear of nuclear threat.

For decades, numerous calls for nuclear disarmament have received little attention, and, regrettably, there has been no progress in this regard. Even the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice emphasizing the legal obligation to engage in a genuine effort for the elimination of nuclear weapons has yet to be heeded. This indifference to the grave concern of the international community over the risk of nuclear weapons has grave consequences for international peace and security. The ignoring of the desire of the international community and the absence of concrete action on nuclear disarmament played a role in the recent development in South Asia. The reactions to that development by Governments, parliaments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and public opinion demonstrated the global wish for a world free of nuclear weapons, an objective which deserves to meet with a favourable reaction from the nuclear-weapon States.

Nuclear weapons serve no purpose today other than to antagonize and to invite tension and conflict. They are a persistent menace to international peace and security. They continue to inhibit the genuine confidence so essential to reforming international relations and enhancing cooperation. We should not allow the optimism derived from the promising developments of the early years of the 1990s to

give way to skepticism at the beginning of the new century. The threat of nuclear arms should be eliminated once and for all.

The non-nuclear parties to the NPT have expressed their will on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament through the agreement on the indefinite extension of the Treaty and the conclusion of the CTBT. Following the conclusion of the CTBT, they expected that flexibility to be reciprocated by others through an agreement on the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of an Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament. To that end, various proposals were made, but they have yet to receive a proper response. My delegation reiterates its desire that, as the highest priority, the Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament should commence multilateral negotiations in 1999 on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time-frame, including a nuclear-weapons convention.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the universality of the NPT and to the full implementation of all its provisions, as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. Pending the conclusion of a convention on nuclear disarmament, that Treaty must be complied with by all Members of the United Nations. The strengthened review process established by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT has a crucial role to play in this regard. In this context, my delegation has proposed the creation of an open-ended standing committee, which would work intersessionally to follow up recommendations concerning the implementation of the NPT, to be agreed to at the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty. It is our earnest hope that this proposal, which has the endorsement of the summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, will be supported by all parties to the NPT in the First Committee.

At its 1998 session the Conference on Disarmament decided to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been in favour of starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as a step in a phased programme of nuclear disarmament. Thus, we decided to go along with the decision on the basis of the presidential statement and the statement of the Group of 21, and on the understanding that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee will be guided equally by the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are of the view that the conclusion of the fissile material cut-off treaty should provide for the promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It should reduce the possibility of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and should prevent the qualitative development of nuclear weapons.

My delegation welcomes the recent statements by India and Pakistan indicating that both countries are moving towards adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). According to article XIV of the CTBT, a conference should be held to consider the ratification status of the States listed in the Treaty. To ensure the Treaty's universality, the timing of the conference should be such as to guarantee as wide a participation as possible. Our hope is that the Convention will have entered into force before that conference is convened. My Government, for its part, intends to expedite the process of ratification and to submit its instrument of ratification as soon as possible. Taking into account that any decision taken by the conference will seriously affect the interests of the States referred to in article XIV of the Convention, we consider that the full participation of States in the conference is imperative.

It is widely recognized that the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world constitutes an important confidence-building and disarmament measure that enhances both regional and global security. This was reflected in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in many other relevant United Nations documents.

The recent development underscores once again the importance of giving serious attention to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a step towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament, particularly in sensitive regions such as the Middle East. The clandestine nuclear programmes of Israel, the only non-party to the NPT in the region, continue to pose an imminent threat to the region's peace and security. It is a proven fact that a selective approach on nuclear non-proliferation will have disastrous effects. Hence, the international community should exert every pressure on Israel to immediately abandon its nuclear programmes, to accede to the NPT without any preconditions and to put its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation issued a joint statement on a nuclear-weapon-

free zone in the Middle East on 16 July 1998. The joint statement urges all parties directly concerned to give serious consideration to practical and urgent measures necessary for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolution. Other nuclear States should do the same and exert pressure on Israel to stop endangering the region and international peace and security by calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It is expected that the United Nations Disarmament Commission would be able to make a momentous contribution to that end by submitting concrete recommendations and guidelines in this regard to the General Assembly. The recent summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban, South Africa, called for the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Main Committee II of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT to consider and recommend proposals on the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. That proposal can provide a suitable framework for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

We welcome the fact that the number of States adhering to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has increased to 117. However, serious initiatives are required to realize the universality of this highly important Convention. It is also a source of concern that a year after the Convention's entry into force many important issues, including articles X and XI, are yet to be resolved. Intricate and extensive means of verification, coupled with provisions to monitor free trade in chemicals among member States, have been part of the basic concept of the Convention. In fact, the conclusion of the Convention became possible when commitments were made in the text of the Convention, as well as in the formal statement of the Australian Group on 8 August 1992, that the restrictions on the transfer of equipment, materials and technology not prohibited by the Convention would not be maintained by the States parties. In the meantime, while parallel export-control regimes continue to work against the development of the developing parties to the CWC, according to the reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the chemicals listed under schedules 2 and 3 of the Convention are still exported to non-parties to the Convention. This issue needs to be resolved in a satisfactory manner if the Convention is to be a success.

The same is true for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and its annexed protocol under consideration. At the informal ministerial meeting here in New York, which was initiated by the Government of Australia, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi reiterated the full support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the strengthening of the verification regime of the BWC and for accelerating the negotiations on the protocol. I would like to add that the current discussions on the establishment of a verification regime are bound to succeed if they are coupled with a firm commitment to the free flow of materials, equipment and technology for peaceful use among Member States, an undertaking with a direct impact on the development of the developing countries in the field of health-related science. Such assurances are essential to reward States that adhere to the protocol and to make a clear distinction between those who stand for a universal instrument and those who prefer to stand aside with their national, and sometimes questionable, programmes. We would refrain from repeating the NPT story.

The illicit trafficking and circulation of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to the general population and to national and regional security. They also contribute to the destabilization of States. This is a complex problem which deserves to be addressed in a serious manner by individual countries as well as by the international community. It is encouraging that the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other actors in international society have mobilized all resources to tackle this issue. In our region, the situation in Afghanistan is a very good example. The heinous massacres and systematic ethnic and religious persecutions that we are witnessing today are the consequences of small arms in the hands of criminals, terrorists and drug smugglers. My Government, as an active member of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, supports any initiative by the United Nations and individual countries to deal with this issue.

I cannot conclude without highlighting the engagement of non-governmental organizations in disarmament affairs as a promising development. Non-governmental organizations are acting as catalysts in promoting the culture of peace and strengthening international peace and security. Their valuable contributions, particularly in the field of the elimination of nuclear weapons, are a source of satisfaction and deserve appreciation.

Fortunately, the re-established Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, has established a constructive collaboration between the Department and non-governmental organizations. In our view, the active participation of non-governmental organizations in the

collective efforts of the Members of the United Nations in the field of disarmament can make the goal of preserving peace and security more attainable.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now call upon the representative of Belarus, who will speak on behalf of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus): At the outset, I should like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Our warmest congratulations also go to the other officers of the Committee. Our delegation is confident that under your wise and able leadership the Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

On behalf of the current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Martynov, I have the honour to introduce the report of the Commission for its 1998 session, contained in document A/53/42. As in earlier years, the report consists of four chapters and an annex containing the results of the deliberations on various disarmament items on the agenda during the 1998 substantive session. The first three chapters contain the introduction, the organizational portion and the list of documents. Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations, and annexes set out the reports of the subsidiary bodies, which duly reflect the status of deliberations that the Commission has achieved this year.

The Disarmament Commission organized its 1998 session in accordance with the mandate set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, as well as the guidelines set by the reform programme, entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which were unanimously adopted by the Commission in 1990. It should be pointed out that, pursuant to the reform programme, the Commission at its organizational session decided to include three substantive items on its agenda: the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements clearly arrived at among the States of the region concerned, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. Working Groups were established to deal with these agenda items. In addition, the Commission established a Committee of the Whole to deal with the issue of prioritization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission in accordance with the request contained in General Assembly resolution 52/12 B. Items 3 and 5 were in their second year of deliberation, and the item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament had to be concluded this year.

The consideration of agenda item 3 has clearly demonstrated that the decision to introduce the nuclear-weapon-free-zone issue into the agenda of the United Nations Disarmament Commission was well timed, and, as in previous years, the convergence of positions on various elements of such zones was clearly visible. However, the differences which remained are rooted in the national-security considerations of the Member States. As a result, the regional and group alliances did not predominate, and purely national positions constituted the basis for the approach of participants to the issue as a whole. Although the Group considered four elements — general overview, purposes and objectives, principles and guidelines and the way ahead — the in-depth consideration of the chapter on principles and guidelines was set aside for the 1999 substantive session. The discussions within Working Group I revealed the growing worldwide support for nuclear-weapon-free zones. Increasingly, such zones are viewed as a contribution to the overall international climate in which the attainment of general and complete disarmament becomes more feasible. There was little argument over the fact that, based on transparency and free exchange of information, such zones foster greater understanding between neighbouring States, encourage cooperation among them and strengthen international peace and security and regional stability. It was also agreed that the scope of all existing and future nuclear-weapon-free zones contains common elements which should be focused on in the coming year.

The deliberations of Working Group II on the issue of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament were undoubtedly the highlight of this year's session. Measured against the background of the high expectations, the result of the negotiations was most unfortunate, as the Group was not able to conclude the item by reaching a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session owing to the particular position of certain delegations. As representatives are aware, the division of views occurred with regard to such fundamental issues as the validity and role of the Final Document of the first special session in the current disarmament environment and the priorities for the remaining decades and beyond. It should be noted that

States demonstrated flexibility and were ready to work towards an agreement and to adopt the Chairman's non-paper as a basis for compromise. As the discussions progressed, the differences in the positions of the groups of States narrowed somewhat. Unfortunately, the existing gap between those positions could not be fully closed. Despite this evident setback, a realistic optimism still exists that by keeping the issue alive it would become possible, through continued efforts and goodwill, to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion, hopefully at the current session of the General Assembly.

In Working Group III, on conventional weapons, it was decided that the Chairman's paper of 1997 would serve as a basis for the deliberations. Delegations further agreed that the core issue was to establish guidelines for post-conflict practical disarmament measures with a view to the consolidation of peace. Many delegations also felt that other types of conventional-disarmament measures, such as regional arms moratoriums, regional arms registers and codes of conduct for weapons transfers, would assist in strengthening stability. As a result, the bulk of the Group's time was spent on setting out a list of practical disarmament measures. However, the attempt on the part of the Chairman to introduce language that would place the measures in the greater context of his report was not accepted by countries which felt that mention of peace accords was outside the mandate of the Group. Consequently, the Chairman annexed his version of guidelines, whose content was the subject of little or no discussion.

In this connection, the current Chairman of the Disarmament Commission would like to make a personal observation. The Working Group will face a serious task in 1999 in order to have the guidelines agreed and adopted in three weeks. Consequently, it would be desirable for the incoming chairman of the Working Group to conduct extensive consultations and prepare draft texts in advance, prior to the next session, to enable the Group to conclude its work in 1999 without delay.

As for the streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission with a view to its reform, this issue was discussed in the Committee of the Whole and was also dealt with in the Chairman's extensive informal consultations. The result of those deliberations was reflected in the final report of the Commission as the Chairman's text. It was also recognized that that text could serve as a basis for further deliberations. In this regard, the Chairman was strongly encouraged by delegations to continue his efforts, and, consequently, an intensive round of informal consultations prior to the resumed session of the First Committee produced a consensus text, which was adopted by the Committee and the General Assembly as decision 52/492. Thus, the General Assembly mandate, pursuant to its resolution 52/12 B, to review the work of the Commission with a view to its reform, has been successfully fulfilled, and the agreed set of measures will be implemented as of the year 2000.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, I would like to express gratitude to all delegations for their understanding and support. A special tribute should be paid to the officers of the Commission, in particular to the 8 Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur, Mr. Vice Skračić of Croatia, to the Chairmen of the three Working Groups — namely, Mr. Miguel Aguirre de Cárcer of Spain, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia and Ambassador Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda — for their hard work and imaginative and creative approach to the tasks entrusted to them by the Commission. The Chairman of the Disarmament Commission would also like to express his gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Jin Yongjian of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and their staffs for their valuable assistance, and to the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya and his colleagues serving as the Secretaries of their Working Groups. His sincere appreciation is extended to all other members of the Secretariat who assisted the Commission in carrying out its task.

With these remarks, I should like to submit the annual report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/53/42.

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): May I first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee. We know we are in excellent hands, and you can count on the full support of the New Zealand delegation.

On almost all fronts, this has been a significant, if not momentous, year. For those of us who set such high store by non-proliferation and disarmament, results have been mixed. Once again this year, there has been good and bad news. There were many positive developments, which we applaud. There is growing adherence to the strengthened safeguards measures established by the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which will make it far more difficult for illegal nuclear-weapons-

development activity to proceed undetected. New Zealand was pleased to sign the Additional Protocol three weeks ago.

The widening adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a source of immense satisfaction for New Zealand. We are gratified that two nuclear-weapon States are now among the 21 ratifying States. Legislation to effect New Zealand's own ratification has had its second reading in Parliament and received unanimous support. We are on track to ratify before the end of the year.

We are delighted that the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines is now ready to enter into force, and we are determined to continue to play a part in ensuring that its objectives and its universalization are fulfilled. Legislation to effect New Zealand's ratification of this important new treaty is before Parliament.

The prize undoubtedly came with agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to begin substantive negotiations to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. This step was overdue, but welcome nonetheless. We regard it as essential for the Conference to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on fissile material as soon as possible early next year so that negotiations proper can get under way.

Designing a fissile-material treaty that will have the capacity to address both the non-proliferation and disarmament imperatives relating to fissile material will be no mean challenge. It will require some creative thinking and political will. One of our tasks will be to ensure that the controls to be put in place will justify international confidence. The treaty must be non-discriminatory and multilateral in its reach, and it will need to deliver cost-effective verification machinery. The goal will be to put in place a credible new international norm that will have the potential to underpin confidence in regions of tension and to enhance the process of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether.

Obviously, the contentious issue of stocks will need to be addressed in an appropriate way. We are realistic enough to appreciate that dealing with production and stocks may not be possible in a single instrument. One might have to follow the other. But sooner or later we shall have to attempt to integrate stocks if a comprehensive fissile-material ban is to become a permanent disarmament measure.

We are pleased that the Conference was able to undertake intensive consultations on nuclear issues. But another urgent priority next year must be to take a decision on establishing an appropriate subsidiary body to address nuclear disarmament. It is simply not acceptable for us that the Conference on Disarmament is unable to engage in deliberations on nuclear issues; nor is it creditable, given our collective international obligations.

Intensive consultations were a start, but are not good enough. We continue to believe that the Conference has a legitimate role to play in considering what steps might usefully be taken to underpin the START process. It must be possible to establish a mechanism that would not undermine that process. The aim can and must be to complement those efforts by adding value to them. A decision should be taken soon, or lingering frustration and division may creep back into the work of the Conference.

We are pleased, too, that a decision on a programme of work proved to be possible in the Conference on Disarmament after a period of inactivity and indecision the year before. The Conference excelled itself with an ambitious programme of substantive issues as well as reform. With hindsight, it was probably an overly ambitious menu, given the limited time the Conference has in any one year for deliberation and negotiations. Next year, it might do well to focus on a smaller range of priority issues. But a decision on work was nevertheless significant, and it demonstrates that this important body is still capable of pushing the global disarmament agenda forward.

We consider that the Conference should take a decision at the beginning of next year on expanding its membership, as recommended by the Special Coordinator. This is unfinished business in what must be an ongoing process of universalization of the Conference on Disarmament. New Zealand will continue to press for this outcome.

Reform of the workings of the Conference is equally overdue. This should not become a preoccupation or an alternative to substantive engagement, but the Conference should demonstrate some leadership in the way it operates. It is nonsense to us that unfinished work in one year cannot automatically be taken up in the beginning of the next year.

It is unacceptable, too, that the Conference, in its annual report, which is before us, was incapable of dealing factually with a critical development in 1998 of direct and immediate importance. The nuclear tests in South Asia

early this year were the subject of intense debate in the Conference, and, at the request of Australia and New Zealand, a special plenary meeting of the Conference was held on 2 June to address the international implications of those tests. Yet the Conference was unable to include a factual reference to this special plenary meeting in its annual report, nor to the fact that 48 of its members and observers issued a joint statement condemning the tests. Precedent was one of the arguments offered to explain this failure, an argument that we reject. Precedent should be a measure, not a mantra.

The negotiations to design a verification protocol for biological weapons are inching forward, but progress has been far too slow. The Australian initiative of holding a ministerial meeting last month in New York was a constructive and creative way to add political impetus to these crucial negotiations. My Foreign Minister, The Right Honourable Don McKinnon, was pleased to act as Chairman at the ministerial meeting on behalf of his Australian colleague.

It has taken almost a quarter of a century after the entry into force of the original Biological Weapons Convention to design verification machinery. That is not a brilliant track record. We need to lift the game in these negotiations, and we very much hope that the protocol will be completed before the end of next year. We are committed to that goal. Our aim must be to deter and prevent violations of the Convention and to ensure compliance. We shall need to take into account the legitimate concerns of industry in this process. All aspects of the negotiating mandate will need to be fulfilled. New Zealand appreciates that some States parties that submit themselves to the Biological Weapons Convention's obligations in good faith may lack the scientific and technical means to uphold these obligations unaided. Evidence suggests that these problems come, not always from a lack of political will, but from a lack of knowledge of what to do. The negotiations should recognize this.

Unfortunately, the disarmament balance sheet this year was not good on all fronts. Another year has slipped by without ratification by the Russian Federation of START II. We regard the START process as hugely important. We also welcome the undertakings to proceed with START III and hope negotiations will get under way without delay.

Ratifications of the protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties remain incomplete. Addressing the problem of the proliferation of small arms is a priority issue. There is an emerging consensus on the devastating effects that the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of these weapons are having, and we welcome the new initiatives which are seeking to address this urgent problem. A holistic approach, as outlined by South Africa in the Committee earlier this week, will be necessary to address the problem. Action will be needed at national, regional and international levels. We agree also that the way forward will require incremental action involving mutually reinforcing steps.

However, the exceptionally bad news this year, was the threat posed to the non-proliferation regime. A significant body blow to the regime was delivered with the decision by India and then Pakistan to undertake nuclear tests in May. Those tests were totally irreconcilable with the claims by both countries that they are committed to nuclear disarmament. Nor will we accept the argument, offered at the time, that the tests were undertaken because of the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament. That is a self-serving argument and has no currency. The tests were undertaken in pursuit of national interests and in the belief that security would be enhanced. Unfortunately, that has not been achieved. The approach India and Pakistan seemed determined to pursue in May belongs to a bygone age.

Indications conveyed recently in the General Assembly relating to signature of the CTBT offer some encouragement, but deeds and not words are what we are looking for when it comes to international norms and non-proliferation. We urge India and Pakistan to stop their nuclear-weapon-development programmes, to refrain from weaponization or from the deployment of nuclear weapons, to cease development of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons and to cease any further production of fissile material. We urge them to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and without condition and to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Along with many others, we are disappointed with the meagre outcome of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT in Geneva this year. Differences over how to deal with the Middle East issue in the NPT setting are most unfortunate. Political issues and differing expectations and perceptions of what the NPT review process can and should deliver were also factors at play in that Geneva meeting.

The NPT review process may be in trouble. Had it not been for differences over the Middle East issue, divisions over how the review process should deal with nuclear

disarmament had the potential to lead to a similar result. One question now being asked is whether the decisions taken at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference are being downgraded or, worse still, are no longer regarded as binding. Minimalist interpretations of the 1995 review process will only take us backwards, not forward. New Zealand will continue to work with others in ensuring that the review process is successful.

We welcomed the increased transparency shown by the nuclear-weapon States at the April meeting of the Preparatory Committee, but some may have been left with the impression that this was offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Differences in perception over both the nature and the scope of the NPT review process will need to be resolved if it is to deliver the enhanced outcome agreed in 1995. A middle way must be found to deal with the reciprocal obligations of disarmament, on the one hand, and the imperatives of non-proliferation, on the other. One will not be possible without the other.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty is absolutely fundamental. One imperative must be to ensure that the legitimate expectations of its members are not suppressed. But New Zealand rejects totally any suggestion that in some way the NPT might no longer be relevant. It is as essential and as indispensable as ever. We could not accept, and would reject totally, any suggestion that it might need to be revisited.

There can be no stepping back from the objective of complete disarmament, including the elimination of nuclear weapons. That is why New Zealand has joined Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, Sweden, Slovenia and South Africa in submitting a new draft resolution on nuclear disarmament in the Committee. We are doing so because we believe a new impetus must be given to the nuclear-disarmament process. This draft resolution reflects the views of the Canberra Commission and many other individuals and Governments that have given careful thought to how to move forward. We do not claim that this is a novel agenda, for it is not. Nor is it a hidden agenda. What we are putting forward in the Committee are simply the elements that are needed to make up a new agenda for progress on nuclear disarmament.

For too long, the debate on nuclear disarmament has tended to take place at the extremes. That has made it all too easy to place the issue into the "too hard" basket, and it has made it comfortable for some to dismiss calls for action on the basis of their being extravagant, confrontational or impossible to contemplate. We have had the classic situation where the perfect became the enemy of the good. This draft resolution calls for the implementation of some practical measures that can be taken now and in the near future. It advocates a step-by-step approach. It is realistic. It advocates mutually reinforcing steps. It does not stray into time-bound frameworks or attempt to put down deadlines, nor does it advocate take-it-or-leave-it conventions. The draft resolution seeks to move the debate in a new direction and onto a measured path where confidence, productive engagement and results can be delivered. It may not be a comfortable scenario for action, but it is not intended to be confrontational. Our aim is to secure the widest possible support for exploring ways to move forward collectively and constructively. The draft resolution is an inclusive endeavour and one on which we hope all Members of the United Nations are ready to engage.

Mr. Maidin (Brunei Darussalam): I would like to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee.

We are confident that with your vast experience you will be able to guide us to a successful conclusion at this year's session. Our congratulations go also to the other officers of the Committee. Let me assure you that we will give our full support to the work of the Committee.

The collapse of bipolarity has brought about an uncertain environment, with strategic gaps and new polarization, all of which have led to a new arms race. Nonetheless, progress has been made in various aspects of arms control and disarmament, particularly in the area of weapons of mass destruction. The continuing and increased support by Members of the Organization offers the international community some optimism.We welcome and will continue to support initiatives undertaken by the international community to maintain international peace and security. The United Nations and its agencies have been instrumental in paving the way for greater international cooperation. This aspect is very significant in strengthening, as well as in consolidating, multilateral principles for disarmament.

We also welcome the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of two Ad Hoc Committees to negotiate effective international arrangements to ensure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and a treaty banning the production of fissile material. We hope that those Committees will lead to successful conclusions in achieving concrete and legally binding agreements.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world is a positive measure towards achieving the ultimate objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We also welcome proposals to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in Europe and Central Asia. The creation of these zones will further strengthen regional and international stability. The issuance of the joint declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda," by the Foreign Ministers of 8 nations last June is a significant development that merits our attention.

For many decades, very few countries have refused to acknowledge landmines and small arms as weapons of mass destruction. Their capacity to destroy or kill is not as great as other known weapons of mass destruction. In December of last year, most of us signed the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. This is another landmark in the history of disarmament, intended to ban the use of this type of weapon.

In addition, in recent years the international community has made tremendous efforts to tackle illicit arms transfers. Although there is still much to be done, we must continue to support these commendable efforts and work together to tackle this problem. We believe that the problem can best be addressed by building a global consensus on, for example, monitoring and controlling such transfers and on their links with trafficking in other contraband goods.

In our efforts to achieve a stable and peaceful world we have encountered many impediments; yet, with the cooperation of Member States, we have gradually overcome them. The road ahead is still full of such impediments, some old and some new. Negotiations are continuing in order to contain and address these problems and, where appropriate, to introduce relevant conventions.

As we rapidly approach the new millennium, we need to be more focused in our work. A peaceful world will be achieved only through the adherence of Member States to the international disarmament conventions and treaties. If we abide by such commitments, we are certain that we can achieve our goal of a world free from the scourge of weapons of mass destruction in the next millennium.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Your recognized experience and diplomatic skills, together with the dedication of the other officers of the Committee and the Secretariat, are assurances that we will enjoy success at this complicated session.

The establishment of an effective system of security as a component of the harmonious development of peoples must be based on shared values. An interdependent world requires that the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter be truly shared and observed by all the members of the international community. Argentina supports the ongoing increase in activities devoted to preventive diplomacy and the role of the Security Council in that regard. Argentina is continuing its customary contribution of human and financial resources to peacekeeping operations.

As we face the new millennium, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction must be a priority item on our agenda. Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. The next Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the growing number of States that have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the decision to create verification machinery for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the decision in the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a cut-off treaty are all promising signs. In this connection, I would also like to note that on 23 September the Argentine Congress approved the CTBT and that we will soon be proceeding to ratification.

This progress is all very well and good, but it is still necessary for all States to renounce the nuclear option. They must give unequivocal guarantees that their nuclear capability will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. As Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella stated in the General Assembly a few weeks ago, Argentina was the first country that, after achieving a nuclear fuel capability, opted for the path of self-restraint early this decade.

As to the recent statements made by the authorities of India and Pakistan in the General Assembly with regard to their intention to take the necessary steps to accede to the CTBT, Argentina hopes that that will take place soon and that it will be done in keeping with the terms of Security Council resolution 1172 (1998).

Argentina is following closely the situation in Iraq in the wake of the suspension of inspections by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and we appeal to Iraq to show a constructive spirit by re-

establishing its relations with the United Nations in accordance with the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretary-General last February and in keeping with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Recent reports by UNSCOM and the IAEA give grounds for optimism with regard to the development of this situation.

In the area of conventional weapons, the most important thing is the imminent entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines. Argentina has begun the internal processes leading to approval of that instrument, and we hope to ratify it very soon.

The current international situation makes possible — and indeed necessary — greater cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations, in accordance with their respective statutes and in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. On the American continent, following important progress in the past decade in the area of human rights and economic integration, we are now establishing a system of security based on conflict prevention, cooperation and confidence-building. Argentina has invited other Governments in the region to participate in a regional dialogue on such specific issues as mutual confidence-building, the strengthening of transparency of information about military budgets and expenditures and the promotion of greater cooperation in defence and international security. Many of these ideas were embodied in the Declaration of San Salvador of February 1998. The regional conferences on confidence-building measures and security held at Santiago, Chile, in 1995 and at San Salvador in 1998 represent an important contribution to the modernization and deepening of the dialogue in our hemisphere. They promote inter-American cooperation to deal with common security problems. At the last session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), at Caracas in June 1998, we reiterated the Organization's mandate to modernize its institutions related to security.

The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials, which Argentina has supported since its inception, is now in the process of being approved by the National Congress. In April 1998, the heads of State of the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile pledged to ratify the Convention and to make headway in developing a single mechanism to register buyers and sellers of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, a task that has been assigned to the ministers of internal Affairs of the respective countries.

This year, Argentina promoted the adoption of a Political Declaration by MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile establishing the region as a zone of peace, which was formally adopted at the Ushuaia Summit last July in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. The Declaration is of great importance. It expresses the common desire to continue along the path of cooperation on matters relating to security. The six countries also agreed to make the zone of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile a region free of anti-personnel landmines, a status to be extended eventually to include the entire Western Hemisphere. They also agreed to establish a common system and uniform methodology of data collection for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and information on military expenditures.

Lastly, the countries of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile agreed to support the work of the OAS Special Committee on Hemispheric Security and to foster cooperation among its members in the exclusively peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy and space technology.

A number of items on the disarmament and international security agenda are still pending. The establishment of a different climate requires full commitment, practical participation, political will and courage on the part of the entire international community if we are to take the necessary decisions.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that your excellent knowledge, long experience and outstanding diplomatic skills will ensure the fruitful and successful outcome of the Committee's work at this session of the General Assembly. Our felicitations also go to the other elected officers of the Committee. Let me assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during the work of the Committee.

We also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his comprehensive statement on the first day of the general debate in the Committee.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, when the international community faces the need to resolve a number of global challenges that are seriously threatening international peace and security, we should intensify our efforts to achieve further substantive progress in the process

of nuclear disarmament, which should bring us closer to the realization of our supreme goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We must note that a number of great achievements have been made thus far. Our efforts have resulted in the adoption of such significant international documents as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines and other documents.

Regrettably, however, despite all of these achievements, we cannot say that we have been entirely successful in all our efforts to make our world a completely secure place in which to live. The truth is, that even now, almost a decade after the end of the cold war, the world situation remains fluid. Conflicts based on ethnic, religious or cultural grounds are still emerging in many parts of our planet, claiming innocent lives and precious resources, while the race in military expenditures knows no bounds.

Over the past few years, with the extension of the NPT and the CTBT, much international attention has been devoted to multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament processes. Universality has been and remains one of the essential goals of that effort. Indeed, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the adoption of the NPT were significant milestones in the disarmament process. They were supplements to and expansions of the corpus of international disarmament and arms-control law. They have a powerful symbolic value regarding concrete commitments by both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States to achieve the ultimate goal of a totally denuclearized world.

My country, the Republic of Uzbekistan, is among the first to have signed and ratified the CTBT. In our country, that document is considered to be an important step towards the implementation of the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament as well as an effective instrument for a nuclear disarmament that will bring us closer to our ultimate aim. Uzbekistan welcomes the fact that 150 countries have signed the Treaty and 21 have ratified it. At the same time, my country's Government calls upon all other States that have not yet done so to sign and to ratify the Treaty, especially those 44 States whose ratifications are needed for the Treaty to come into force.

Meanwhile, when the world community is moving towards complete nuclear disarmament, new nuclear tests have been conducted. The Republic of Uzbekistan expresses its deep concern over the current situation in the South Asian region. The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have essentially damaged stability in the region and have put the entire process of nuclear disarmament under a serious threat.

I would like to reiterate my Government's position on this question: we resolutely condemn those acts, appeal to both countries to refrain from carrying out further nuclear tests and call upon them to sign the CTBT unconditionally. My Government welcomes the statements by the leaders of those two States made last month in the General Assembly, in which they expressed their intention to set a moratorium on nuclear tests. We hope that those words will be strengthened by concrete measures by the two countries.

My Government supports the decision of the Conference on Disarmament in August of this year to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. That treaty represents a starting point towards the realization of a long-held and high-priority goal of the Government of Uzbekistan. We are confident that the fissile material cut-off treaty is an important and logical step in the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament process, and it should be the next step after the conclusion of the CTBT. Let me assure the Committee of my Government's strong support for the process of maintaining and further strengthening the nuclear-disarmament regime.

Along with the universality of nuclear disarmament, it has become increasingly apparent that factors of regional insecurity can be significant obstacles to non-proliferation and disarmament and that they are, in fact, among the major causes of arms proliferation and arms races. Therefore, the regional dimensions of arms control and disarmament need to be addressed by the international community. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States within the region, and taking into account the special characteristics of regions, is an important contribution to non-proliferation, disarmament and, above all, international security.

While certain international efforts depend on broad international cooperation, the trend in recent years towards nuclear-weapon-free zones is evidence of the significance

of regional initiatives in advancing the cause of global non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Such zones now cover nearly the whole of the southern hemisphere, in addition to Antarctica, the seabed and outer space. My delegation also supports the development of new concepts for States whose geographical situation makes it difficult for them to join existing or prospective nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this connection, we wish to recognize Mongolia's initiative in promoting the recognition of single-State nuclear-weapon-free zones.

I am delighted to note that the issue of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia has secured its deserved spot in the international disarmament agenda. The idea initiated by the countries of the region was warmly welcomed by the international community. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and welcomed its indefinite extension in 1995. I believe that delegations are aware that, in conformity with the provisions of the NPT, *inter alia*, its article VII and paragraphs 5 to 7 of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the leaders of the five Central Asian States, in the Almaty Declaration of 28 February 1997, expressed a unanimous opinion on the need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and called upon all States to support that idea. The political will of the States of the region was reiterated in the statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of five States of the region, which was adopted at Tashkent on 15 September 1997.

I should like to note with satisfaction the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 52/38 S on 9 December 1997, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", in which the General Assembly called upon all States to support this initiative and requested the Secretary-General, within existing resources, to provide assistance to the Central Asian States in the preparation of the form and elements of a future treaty.

Since the adoption by consensus of the General Assembly resolution, we have made considerable progress in realizing this initiative. In keeping with the provisions of the resolution, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has provided the regional States with substantive advice on the preparation of a draft treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. To date, the group of regional experts established with the financial and organizational assistance of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, has held two meetings for the consideration of the form and elements of a future regional treaty. The process of dialogue among the Central Asian countries with nuclear-weapon States on the elements of the future treaty was continued at the Bishkek Consultative Meeting of Experts on the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone hosted by the Government of Kyrgyzstan. As a result of those deliberations, the States of the region elaborated a draft of basic elements of the future treaty. We consider that as an important step, and my Government is committed to constructive work in this direction with other regional States and all interested countries.

As before, this year's draft resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia has been prepared by the States of our region. We sincerely hope that the General Assembly will be in a position to give its unanimous support to the proposed draft resolution at this session.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for their assistance in the process of disarmament and the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. We are also grateful for the assistance of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which has provided us with enormous support.

Another source of grave and urgent concern for my country is biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. The problem of the proliferation and use of such weapons has been directly addressed by the world community. We welcome the sustainable developments that are being made in these areas of disarmament. The Republic of Uzbekistan regards the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons as significant milestones in the disarmament process and will continue to support all the efforts of the international community aimed at the further development and strengthening of this process.

Uzbekistan reaffirms its strong commitment to the aim of the complete elimination of all anti-personnel landmines, as well as the prohibition of their use, production, stockpiling and transfer. We welcome the opening of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines for signature in Ottawa in December of 1997. We have been encouraged by efforts made by the international community to move towards a world free of those inhumane weapons.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, we are standing at the threshold of a new millennium which belongs to our children. We must convey to them a world that is entirely secure, a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. In order to achieve this noble purpose, however, the international community must act unanimously in all its efforts. For our part, I would like to assure the Committee that the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and its people will spare no efforts to contribute to this important process.

Mr. Belinga Eboutou (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. Chairman, in speaking for the first time in the First Committee, I have the pleasure of congratulating you on your illustrious election.

The creation of our Organization in the aftermath of the Second World War stemmed from the will of the peoples of the United Nations to fulfil a dream and to realize a profound and timeless aspiration, namely, to banish war and to see peace and security reign among nations. The end of the cold war revived this dream and this aspiration, and many of us hoped that the threats and agony of war might finally give way to the establishment of peace and the promotion of development.

Those hopes have not been totally disappointed, inasmuch as our efforts have led to the signature of several international instruments, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Mines, of which Cameroon was one of the first signatories, the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and other similar regional treaties. In addition, we welcome the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has been able to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to develop forms of protection for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and an Ad Hoc Committee to carry out studies leading to the negotiation of a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty, one that is effectively and internationally verifiable, banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

These are considerable achievements, but we must recognize that they are far from fully meeting our expectations with regard to general and complete disarmament. The respect for and application of these various instruments have not always been in keeping with the spirit that prevailed at their conception and adoption. Indeed, we have real cause for concern. Numerous conflicts are breaking out or ongoing in various parts of the world, thereby intensifying the arms race. The recent nuclear tests in South Asia have exacerbated tensions in that region and have reminded us that we cannot take non-proliferation as a given. And how can we fail to be concerned in the face of the manufacture by certain countries of long-range ballistic missiles or the refusal by others to implement the total ban on nuclear tests and on the production of fissile material for military purposes, not to mention the violations we are witnessing with respect to the START negotiations. The nuclear threat is still a reality, posing frightful dangers to all peoples and threatening the survival of mankind as a whole. We must therefore eradicate it together, through commitments and actions by the whole of the international community.

With that hope, Cameroon feels that we must redouble our efforts to bring all countries to ratify international disarmament conventions and to promote the conclusion of relevant new conventions, especially with regard to fissile material, and to mobilize the world's civilian populations more than before on behalf of general and complete disarmament. In the same vein, Cameroon is strongly in favour of the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as was recently proposed by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement at Durban.

I mentioned the nuclear threat weighing upon the world. However, like others, I should also like to mention the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms, which foster insecurity in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa. The Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871) and the debate it inspired both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly are illuminating in this respect. At that time, Cameroon referred to the situation in the Central African subregion, where, owing to various internal and external conflicts, the situation today is unstable. War and the illicit flow of arms that stems from it, are conducive to insecurity and organized crime. To combat this phenomenon, it is therefore urgent to curb, if not eradicate, the circulation of and illicit trade in small arms in the subregion. As a member of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, Cameroon intends to work actively along those lines, together with the other States concerned. The scope of the phenomenon, its serious consequences and its ramifications, which go beyond the subregion and Africa as a whole, demand the mobilization of considerable resources, and we appreciate the contribution the United Nations is already making to the

Standing Advisory Committee and hope for even greater support from the international community. That support is increasingly vital, since the phenomenon has been little studied in the Central African subregion and, as a result, is becoming difficult to control, given the lack of reliable data.

In our permanent quest for general and complete disarmament, we need to concern ourselves not only with the supply of weapons but also with the demand for them. In this connection, it is essential that as many Member States as possible adhere to the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which will enter into force in December 1998, and to the Ottawa Convention.

Consideration of the question of disarmament cannot be limited to references to the impact weapons have on international peace and security. Humankind had hoped that the end of the cold war would lead to a speedier process of disarmament that would favour the mobilization of additional resources earmarked for development. Those hopes are far from being fulfilled. The persistence and proliferation of hotbeds of tension and areas of conflict continue to absorb vast resources, to the detriment of the fight against poverty. As the Secretary-General noted here in the Committee, the arms race diverts resources and capabilities to the detriment of development and does not contribute to peace.

That being said, the imposing issue of disarmament must remain the focal point of concern for the international community. It is a difficult goal, but Cameroon is of the view that its attainment is not impossible. We must do all we can to make it a reality. It is a vital and necessary condition for preserving the peace and security that peoples need to live, to thrive and to develop. Let us take action now to achieve general and complete disarmament. It is in the interest of all of us and of future generations. It is a difficult task, yes, but, as has been said before, we must be pessimistic in our analyses but optimistic in our actions.

The Chairman: I now call upon Mr. Wolfgang Hoffmann, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Mr. Hoffmann (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I thank members for once again giving me an opportunity to address the First Committee on the progress being made by the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Just over two years ago, the CTBT was adopted by an overwhelming majority of States. The CTBT's opening for signature on 24 September 1996 was a major milestone in the uphill struggle to ban all nuclear explosions and in arms control in general. Indeed, on signing the CTBT on its first day of existence, many States expressed their conviction that the Treaty would contribute to ending the nuclear-arms race and to the process of eliminating nuclear weapons.

This year, however, has seen some unexpected developments, which are a sharp reminder that there can never be room for complacency in our efforts to stop nuclear explosions. Following the tests announced by India and then Pakistan, both the Chairman of the Preparatory Commission and I issued statements echoing the deep concern expressed here by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, appealing to all parties concerned in the region for restraint and urging both countries to join the CTBT without delay and unconditionally.

At the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission in August, States signatories expressed deep concern and regret at the decision by India and Pakistan to carry out the tests, noting that they were contrary to the goal of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. Concern was also expressed that the tests would contribute to a nuclear-arms race in South Asia. Delegations called upon India and Pakistan to sign and subsequently ratify the CTBT without delay and without conditions.

This appeal was taken up at the twenty-ninth South Pacific Forum, held in the Federated States of Micronesia in August, at which the heads of State or Government of 11 countries and the representatives of five others took part. The Forum reaffirmed its strong opposition to nuclear testing and condemned the tests by India and Pakistan. Grave concern was expressed at the challenge the tests constituted to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and at the risk of a nuclear-arms race in South Asia. The Forum urged its members and those countries that had not already done so to ratify the CTBT before the end of the three-year period after its opening for signature.

At the twelfth summit meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in South Africa last month, in which 113 member States took part, including 45 at the level of head of State or Government, the Durban

Declaration for the New Millennium was adopted. In that Declaration, the complexities arising from the nuclear tests in South Asia were noted, and the commitment by the parties concerned in the region to exercise restraint and to discontinue nuclear tests was considered positively. Later last month, at the forty-second regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), member States expressed grave concern and strongly deplored the nuclear tests conducted in South Asia in May. All States that had not yet done so were urged to become parties to the CTBT without delay and without conditions.

I mention these developments as a reminder of the threat posed by nuclear explosive testing and of our duty to respect the wishes of our 150 States signatories, which, by signing the CTBT, have formally undertaken a commitment to ban nuclear testing and expressed the wish to see a universal ban enter into force. It is for this reason that I am encouraged by the self-imposed moratoriums on further testing by India and Pakistan and the recent announcements by the Prime Ministers of both countries of the intention of their respective Governments to sign the CTBT.

The Treaty is becoming increasingly universal, with its 150 States signatories and 21 ratifications. That figure includes 10 of the 44 States listed in the Treaty whose ratification is necessary for it to enter into force and two nuclear-weapon States, France and the United Kingdom. Although the speed with which ratification instruments can be deposited depends on domestic national processes, I have been assured by many Member States that the ratification process is advancing smoothly in their countries. Nevertheless, we need to ensure that we have as many ratifications as possible by the third anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty.

In line with the continuing momentum towards signature and ratification, the Preparatory Commission is also working towards universality in its task of establishing the Treaty's global verification regime to monitor compliance with the test ban. Twelve countries -- Pakistan among them -- that are not signatories to the CTBT have offered to host stations or have placed existing facilities at our disposal. The worldwide network of 321 monitoring facilities, supported by 16 radionuclide laboratories and spanning some 90 countries, which will be capable of detecting and identifying nuclear explosions, has to be operational by the time the Treaty enters into force. Currently, about 60 stations, on a voluntary basis, are transmitting data generated by four complementary technologies — seismic, radionuclide, infrasound and hydroacoustic — to our International Data Centre at Vienna. The Commission is now authorized by exchange of letters to initiate work at 82 stations in 30 countries. Thus, the groundwork has been laid for conducting surveys to assess the suitability of the locations chosen for new stations and to formulate the technical specifications for their construction and for the purchase of the equipment they need. However, for the installation, certification, operation and maintenance of monitoring stations, we want to conclude facility agreements with States signatories as soon as possible.

We envisage that a network of 170 primary and auxiliary seismic stations will receive the largest investment of capital over the next two years. So far, surveys at 11 sites have been concluded or are under way, and procurement of equipment for 12 primary and one auxiliary site has been initiated. Looking at the projected 80 radionuclide stations, 19 site surveys have been conducted or are under way, and procurement of equipment for 10 stations has been initiated. As for the 60 infrasound stations foreseen in the Treaty, 19 site surveys have been conducted or are under way, and procurement of equipment for 7 stations has been initiated. With regard to the 11 hydroacoustic stations, four site surveys have been concluded or are under way, and procurement of equipment for two stations has been initiated.

The International Data Centre, which will be processing the continuous flow of data generated by the four technologies from the monitoring stations for transmission to the States signatories, was inaugurated at Vienna in January. The first of four releases of application software from the prototype International Data Centre at Arlington, Virginia, was delivered and initially tested successfully in April. By 15 May, real-time data from the stations I mentioned were being received at our Centre using the newly installed high-speed communication link to the prototype Centre.

Although our Centre could not provide real-time processing and analysis during the nuclear tests announced by India because it was still installing the first release of application software, it retrieved data shortly afterwards from 28 primary seismic stations for 11 May for archiving and analysis. Despite the fact that it was in the middle of software trials during the tests announced by Pakistan, the Centre received data from 28 and 30 May from 29 and 23 primary seismic stations, respectively. The automatic processing of these data provided reasonable first estimates of the locations of the events, which were passed on to States signatories. Given the limited development of the

current network of monitoring stations, the monitoring and analysis of these events in May were remarkably successful. Indeed, they should give us all a high degree of confidence in the ability of the evolving verification regime to detect the conduct of nuclear explosions in all environments and to monitor adherence to the CTBT. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to ensure the reliable detection, identification and location of such events and to provide a deterrent to clandestine nuclear testing.

This year has seen the signing of a contract with an international partner to establish the global communications infrastructure for the CTBT, which is the largest single item of investment in the verification regime. Over the next 10 years, a complex global network of very small-aperture terminals will be installed to ensure the swift and secure transport of data, even in the severest weather conditions, between the 337 facilities of the International Monitoring System, the International Data Centre and States signatories. By April of next year, 30 monitoring stations should be linked to the Centre by satellite dishes. The work involved in establishing this infrastructure is a major challenge for the communications industry because of its global coverage, spanning locations as far apart as Antarctica and Greenland and as remote as, for instance, Tristan da Cunha and the Galapagos Islands.

The Commission has also extended its outreach to States signatories and the host countries of stations, particularly the 52 that do not have permanent missions in Vienna. The talks that we have had with delegations in the duty stations and capitals concerned have broadened universal understanding of the relevance of our work in the context of each country's specific priorities, increased participation in the Preparatory Commission and accelerated the ratification process and the establishment of national authorities. The international cooperation workshop we are holding next month will be another opportunity to bring home to countries the benefits of joining the Treaty. We are equipping some 90 countries with the most up-to-date technology, paying for the operation of their stations and training staff.

As regards training, regional workshops on the International Monitoring System have been held this year in Japan and Kazakhstan. The first technical training programme for operators for monitoring stations will be starting next Monday in Vienna. Afterwards, the participants will undergo in-depth training at facilities in Argentina, Norway and the United States. The International Data Centre in Vienna will begin its first training programme next month, lasting six months.

Work has also begun on laying the foundations for on-site inspections provided for in the Treaty should the Executive Council consider that further clarification of an ambiguous event is necessary. An operational manual is being drawn up, as well as a list of basic equipment for testing and training purposes. A third workshop for inspections will be held next month, and the first introductory training course will be held this December.

As a newcomer sharing premises with other, older common-system organizations, the Commission is constantly aware of today's need to maintain cost-effectiveness and efficiency in achieving tomorrow's targets of universality. Currently, we have 155 staff members from 55 States signatories. There are 236 posts foreseen in the 1999 budget. As for participation in our work by States signatories, almost 400 experts from 43 countries are now using e-mail and fax facilities to take part in discussions on verification matters from their home countries. This innovation of the provisional Technical Secretariat has accelerated the speed with which issues can be formulated, aired and then transmitted to the Commission for its consideration. A second secure Web site is now being set up to enable documents on financial and administrative matters to be distributed electronically as soon as they have been finalized.

We are learning from the experience of other organizations based at the Vienna International Centre. A joint consultative group has examined the potential for synergies between our organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has already facilitated our work in many ways. Last year, the IAEA provided us with financial services until we took over this function ourselves. We have also adopted the structure of the IAEA budget and modelled our financial rules on those of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which in turn closely followed those of the IAEA. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization, too, helped us with procurement to get us started, but now that it has become clear that outsourcing is not always cost-effective, we are building up our own structures in order to take care of such core administrative tasks ourselves, with the backing of our States signatories.

Put simply, our goal is to keep our administrative expenses below the target numbers of the United Nations administrative reform and to carry out many tasks at a cost lower than that prevailing in other international organizations. Our efforts to achieve this goal have been acknowledged by our States signatories in their active participation in our meetings and in their willingness to

sustain our work financially. Currently, the collection rate for the 1997 assessed contributions is over 96 per cent, and for 1998 contributions it is over 63 per cent, some 10 per cent higher than it was at this same time last year.

In November, the Commission will meet, hopefully to agree on a budget for 1999. We have two choices: either we can opt for a high budget that enables the verification system to be completed in a short time-frame or we can adopt a more modest investment plan providing for steady growth with a contingency plan for a significant increase if entry into force, as we all wish, should come sooner. In any event, we can be sure that we will have a good verification system for a good Treaty.

In concluding, I should like to reiterate my appeal to all States to participate in our endeavour and to continue to contribute to the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in its efforts to prepare for the entry into force of this important arms-control agreement.

The Chairman: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kim Sam Jong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise the right of reply to respond to the remarks made by the South Korean representative at yesterday's meeting.

First, let me refer to the issue regarding the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The South Korean representative asserted that we should comply with the Safeguards Agreement regardless of the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. This assertion came from ignorance of the interrelation between the Agreed Framework and the Safeguards Agreement. In 1993, we declared our withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) because the Safeguards Agreement had been abused for putting political and military pressures on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Later, in 1994, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea/United States Agreed Framework was adopted, and we temporarily suspended the effectuation of our declared withdrawal from the NPT on condition that the Agreed Framework be implemented. Therefore, the issue of the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement can be resolved only when the Agreed Framework is implemented.

These two agreements are inseparably linked with each other. What is important with regard to the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States is the fact that it reflects the interests of both sides in a very careful way. Accordingly, it is unreasonable to ask out of unilateral interest for the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement without any regard to the implementation of the Agreed Framework. If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea/United States Agreed Framework is broken, we have no choice but to effectuate our decision on withdrawal from the NPT. The South Korean representative is well advised to correctly understand the linkage of the two Agreements.

On the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it cannot be achieved unless nuclear threats against the North and the nuclear umbrella of the South are removed. This is so clear that I will avoid further elaboration on it.

Secondly, let me turn to the issue of political and military confrontation. The South Korean representative spoke as if his country were interested in removing political and military confrontation on the Korean peninsula and making efforts for its realization. This is like reversing black and white. South Korea is clamouring about North-South coexistence, but it fails to come up with a reunification proposal based on coexistence. If it truly wanted North-South coexistence, it should have responded positively to our proposal of confederal reunification, the main thrust of which is to reunify the country on the basis of North-South coexistence. Instead, it is attempting to put the question of reunification aside to be resolved in the distant future, with a view to concealing its true intention to achieve reunification based on its own system. Not only that, it is begging the United States and Japan for cooperation and collaboration in order to gain advantage in confrontation with the North. Its claim for North-South reconciliation and the "Sunshine Policy" is also for the same purpose.

Militarily as well, South Korea is begging for a security alliance with the United States and the permanent stationing of United States troops and is strongly opposed to the conclusion of a peace agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, which is a prerequisite for the removal of military confrontation. In fact, the parties that now have armed forces on the Korean peninsula are the North and the South of Korea and the United States. Under these circumstances, if military confrontation is to be removed, security mechanisms should be established among the three parties.

At present, an agreement on non-aggression has already been adopted between the North and the South of Korea, and the United States and South Korea are maintaining a mutual-defence treaty. However, there is no security arrangement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. To fill this vacuum, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States should conclude a peace agreement.

All these facts show that the South Koreans are still trying to maintain intact their ultimate goal, which they set forth during the cold-war era. But if there is any change now, it is only a tactic. I therefore urge them to come forward with a true and sincere mind, to remove the political and military confrontation on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. Chairman, my delegation will have an appropriate opportunity to convey its felicitations to you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee.

I have listened very carefully over the past few days to various statements regarding the nuclear tests in South Asia. My delegation appreciates the concern which has been voiced by many delegations, although we do not share their assessments fully. We will have an opportunity to explain our position once again in some detail in our general statement.

I have asked to speak because there have been some remarks and statements here which seem to assert that Pakistan has justified its tests on the basis of the fact that there was no progress in nuclear disarmament. This is not true. We have stated that we were compelled to test because our neighbour tested, and this was a security compulsion. Certainly those countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization military alliance will fully understand these compulsions, because, as their communique states, nuclear weapons are meant to leave the aggressor in no doubt as to the consequences of an aggression. We face similar compulsions, and our tests were justified by those compulsions, not because there was lack of nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, I have heard some statements here which refer to the statement of my Prime Minister in the General Assembly. This morning, my colleague from New Zealand said, in effect, "We are not satisfied with words, we want deeds." I will not refer to the arrogance of this posture, but I would like to inform the Committee that the words spoken by my Prime Minister were the consequence of very high-level and important consultations held with important leaders. They were not spoken without regard and in vain. They spelt out clearly the conditions under which Pakistan would be able to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — first and foremost, the removal of coercion, progress towards the resolution of the underlying disputes and the absence of financial or political blackmail. So I would add that we will not respond well to verbal blackmail either.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.